United Nations ST/CS/SER.A/41*

Secretariat

14 August 1998

Editorial directive

Prepared by Editorial Control

To: All those concerned with drafting and editing United Nations documents and publications

Subject: **Use of gender-sensitive language**

1. The purpose of the present directive is to remind all members of the Secretariat to pay maximum attention to the need to use gender-sensitive language when writing in their official capacities and to avoid sex-specific and potentially discriminatory expressions in their written communications.

2. Because of rapidly changing practice and the linguistic diversity in the Organization, it is not possible to issue global guidelines on gender-sensitive usage. However, in the absence of a specific decision to the contrary by a legislative body of the United Nations, the policy in each language is to follow, to the greatest extent possible, the best practice in the outside world, generally, the usage adopted by respected writers and journalists. In this regard, staff members may also wish to keep abreast of trends in this area as reflected in the various commercial style manuals as well as publications of other international organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Amnesty International. Finally, staff members are invited to refer to the relevant guidelines for the equal treatment of men and women in the Secretariat, which are contained in information circular ST/IC/1992/67 of 29 October 1992.

3. In view of the complexity of the issue in a multicultural environment, the various language units of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services will develop internal norms and will be available to advise staff members who may wish to consult them on gender-related drafting problems. Queries from members of delegations are also welcome.

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* Reissued for technical reasons.

98-24542 (E) 210898